

Survey Reveals Gen Z's Shift Away from Big Law as They Explore New Career Paths



In a survey conducted between January and March of this year, Major, Lindsey & Africa, a renowned legal search firm, sought insights from law students and young lawyers worldwide, focusing on those attending the top 100 law schools as ranked by U.S. News & World Report. The survey results, released this month, reveal a significant decline in Gen-Z attorneys' desire to work for BigLaw firms after completing their law school education.

According to the survey findings, while 70% of respondents expressed their intention to pursue a career in the law firm track, only 39% indicated their interest in joining a BigLaw firm. This marks a notable decrease from the 59% figure reported in the MLA's 2020 survey. Moreover, a staggering 53% of Gen-Z respondents expressed a desire to work in-house, for the government, or for non-profit organizations in the long run, in comparison to just 23% who aspire to become law firm partners.

The survey also delved into the factors influencing Gen-Z attorneys' career decisions. Respondents cited opportunities for advancement and the highest market salary as primary factors that could potentially retain them within a BigLaw firm. However, the survey revealed that long work hours, including late nights and weekends, were strong deterrents for remaining in a BigLaw job.

Jacqueline Bokser LeFebvre, managing director and co-author of the survey, highlighted Gen-Z attorneys' value on work-life balance and flexible work arrangements. LeFebvre emphasized that the pandemic has further intensified this trend. While acknowledging the occasional requirement for late nights or weekend work, Gen-Z attorneys are increasingly seeking career paths that offer benefits beyond monetary compensation. Factors such as flexible and remote work options, part-time work policies, and comprehensive mental health support are gaining prominence among this generation of legal professionals.

Get noticed by top law firms and sign up for LawCrossing now.

The survey results indicate a significant shift in the mindset and career aspirations of Gen-Z attorneys, reflecting their desire for a more balanced and fulfilling professional life. Traditional notions of success, such as partnership at a law firm, are being reevaluated in favor of alternative paths that prioritize personal well-being and job satisfaction.

As law firms strive to attract and retain top talent from the younger generation, the survey findings serve as a crucial wake-up call. Law firms must adapt their policies and practices to align with the evolving expectations of Gen-Z attorneys. Offering flexible work arrangements, fostering work-life balance, and prioritizing mental health support can help firms create a more attractive and supportive environment for the incoming generation of legal professionals.

The survey conducted by Major, Lindsey & Africa sheds light on the changing preferences and motivations of Gen-Z attorneys during the pandemic. The results indicate a declining interest in BigLaw firms and a growing inclination towards alternative career paths that prioritize work-life balance and well-being. Law firms must acknowledge these shifting priorities and adapt their strategies to effectively recruit and retain Gen-Z talent in the evolving legal landscape.